

**MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL RESOURCES APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
January 31, 2007
Room W130, West Office, Building, State Capitol Complex**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Dennis Stowell, Co-Chair
Rep. Ben Ferry, Co-Chair
Sen. Margaret Dayton
Rep. Roger Barrus
Rep. Jack Draxler
Rep. Carl Duckworth
Rep. Kerry W. Gibson
Rep. James R. Gowans
Rep. John G. Mathis
Rep. Michael E. Noel
Rep. Steve Sandstrom

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sen. Mike Dmitrich and Sen. Valentine

STAFF: Ivan Djambov, Fiscal Analyst
Diane Obeshaw, Committee Secretary

Note: A list of visitors and a copy of handouts are filed with the committee minutes.

SPEAKERS: Kory Holdaway, Representative, Mary Tullius, Director of Division of Parks & Recreation, Jeff Salt, Julie Peck Dotoling, Utah Recreational Trails Council, Representative Allen,

Sen. Stowell called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

Rep. Holdaway began by requesting ongoing appropriations of \$500,000 to deal with non-motorized trails, and to help with the economic development of these trails. He also expressed his particular interest in the Jordan River Parkway Trail and how he would like to see the completion of that project which began in the early 1990's..

Mary Tullius, Director of Division of Parks & Recreation, spoke in favor of this appropriation and shared the history of non-motorized trail funding. She stated that the fund was \$950,000 prior to the budget cuts, and those budget cuts came in increments of \$25,000 and \$50,000 down to the point when there was \$30,000 left in that fund. Since 2002 there have been two other appropriations this Division has seen, one was last year for \$250,000. That money goes to the communities and counties and to other state agencies that apply. But it's on a 50/50 matching basis. She stated that there are now trails in every county and that this money has done a lot of good in the state. It's also leveraged with other federal funds, and it comes from user groups, non-profits, counties, cities and federal agencies.

Jeff Salt, President of The Foundation for the Provo Jordan River Parkway, also spoke in favor of the completion of the Jordan River Trailway. He stated how this particular trail would connect Farmington Bay back to Utah County, up through the Provo River to Park City and down Parley's Canyon back into Salt Lake County. He mentioned how Salt Lake County is nearly 80% complete, but they have 7 segments remaining that are going to total \$8 million to complete.

Julie Peck-Dotoling, Utah Recreational Trails Council, spoke about how this money will only be used for trails, trail usage and the building and completion of trails.

Rep. Sheryl Allen, requested \$200,000 for the Division of Parks and Recreation in order to offset the negative revenue impact her bill, HB214, would have on the Division. This bill reinstates the free park pass for senior citizens which now costs \$35 per year. The bill was amended to require a one-time fee that the seniors will pay, but she stated that it will still have negative impact on the Division's revenues.

Ivan Djambov, Fiscal Analyst, discussed a summary of the major non-lapsing balances for the agencies in the Sub-Committee budget. The agencies have requested authorization to make one-time expenditures should any of their FY 2007 unrestricted appropriations remain unexpended at the end of that fiscal year. This allows the agencies to pay for projects that require more than one year to complete. If the Legislature approves the request, the approval will appear as intent language in the Supplemental Appropriations Act (UCA 63-38-8.1).

The Fiscal Analyst, then introduced the Division of Parks and Recreation. He stated that this agency is responsible for the management and development of all state parks, statewide boating safety and off highway vehicle safety. Currently this agency manages 42 state parks, with the newest state park being the Flight Park in Draper that opened last year and is known worldwide as one of the best training sites for both para gliding and hang gliding.

Mr. Djambov discussed the building block requests for the Division of Parks and Recreation. The Division is requesting funding for four additional journey maintenance positions, as well as ongoing funding for the parks' maintenance and emergency repair needs. The funding will provide the manpower and materials to assist the regional maintenance crews in keeping up with the increasing parks' maintenance needs. The Analyst recommended the Committee place on its priority list a request for ongoing appropriation of \$300,000 from the General Fund, as well as to provide ongoing appropriations from Parks' restricted funds for \$160,000 from the GFR - Boating, and \$160,000 from the GFR - Off Highway Vehicle.

For the Capital Facilities Improvements, the division is requesting for FY 2008 a one-time appropriations of \$317,000 from the GFR - State Park Fees for its incentive program for increased revenue collections. The Division Administration offers to parks that exceed their revenue goals a percentage of the extra funds for specific one-time park improvements or

programs, such as construction of interpretive kiosks or development of a nature program.

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The Division is requesting for FY 2008 a one-time restricted funds appropriations to purchase and install automated gates at some of its parks. This will be a pilot project and the anticipated benefits are quicker visitor access to the parks, increased revenue collections, potential personnel savings, and gaining a better understanding of who parks' customers are. The return on investment (ROI) for this project was estimated to be 14-28% with payback time of four to seven years. The Analyst recommended the Legislature provide a one-time appropriation of \$100,000 from the GFR - State park Fees for the purchase of automated entry systems and recommends the Subcommittee require a report on the ROI in the 2008 General Session.

The Division is requesting for FY 2007 a supplemental appropriation of \$15,000 from the GFR - State Park Fees to partner with Heber Valley Chamber of Commerce to promote and solicit golf tournaments for state park golf courses. Those tournaments will generate additional revenues by filling the available time slots during the weekdays and introduce those courses to new clientele. The Analyst recommended the Committee fund this request.

With the attempt to increase park visitation and stimulate local economies, the Division is requesting funding for advertising and promotions. The funding will be matched with donations from private and public sponsors. The Analyst recommended the Committee provide for FY 2008 a one-time appropriation of \$68,000 from the GFR - State Park Fees restricted funds.

Lastly, the new management of the This Is The Place Foundation has requested an ongoing appropriation of \$100,000 from the General Fund to restore the state funding to the level of the original agreement between the State and the Foundation. The Analyst recommended the Committee place this request on its priority list for the Executive Appropriations Committee.

Mr. Djambov then the budget brief relating to the Parks and Recreation Capital and reviewed the funding sources for this line item. A summary of each of the major funding sources for the Division's capital needs, along with the general criteria of how the funding can be used is listed in the green report titled "State Parks' Capital Expenditures - A report to the Executive Appropriations Committee" that was given out from the Analyst at the beginning of the session.

Mike Styler, Director of Department of Natural Resources, wanted to talk about a Capital Budget item that comes with a request of \$20 million. 28,000 acres on Tabby Mountain located in both Wasatch and Duchene Counties. He stated that there is a lot of camping, hunting, fishing, trails and grazing on this mountain, and as the hunters and grazers found out it was for sale, they started talking among themselves and decided it was something they wanted to consider purchasing because of the value of this public land, operated by SITLA. They met with Governor Huntsman, who asked them to make a budget request for \$20 million in one-time money for the purchase. In addition, they also started talking about trading some of the land

owned by The Division of Wildlife Resources and the Division of Forestry Fire and State Lands with SITLA, as a trade toward this land purchase.

Mary Tullius, Director of Division of State Parks and Recreation, spoke about the value of Utah

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Parks, the benefits they offer Utah citizens and visitors to Utah, the employment opportunities, and the \$88 million in annual state and tax revenue.

Mrs. Tullius explained how with the \$3 million the State gave them last year, Palisades Park will open up in September 2007. She also talked about their challenges, such as their demand for more campsites and low wages (many Parks' employees qualify for low income programs, including free school lunches and low income housing). She stated that they are looking for ways to increase their funding and helping themselves but she said they're not meeting their needs.

This Division has the responsibility for over \$178 million in fixed assets. This is one of the highest in State Governments. They're hoping to get funding approved for improvements including \$250,000 for four maintenance positions to be filled, \$300,000 for critical infrastructure repairs not covered by DFCM, as well as typical maintenance projects.

Brad Barber, Utah Avalanche Center, spoke about the increased need for avalanche safety and the significant need for State Funding. Their goal is to increase the training and safety measures to more people who are utilizing the back country trails for skiing, snow-mobile use, snow boarding and cross-country skiers. They want and need to promote avalanche forecast, awareness and safety training to save more lives. He also stated that they want to partner with Utah schools to implement avalanche education to Utah school children, starting in the 8th grade. He suggested that this is a good use of Utah money. Right now they get 40% of their money from the state parks and from what snow mobile users pay. Totaling \$82,000 per year. They are requesting on-going appropriations from the Division.

The following people spoke in favor of the above request for Avalanche Awareness funds.

Ken Rossum, Utah Snowmobile Association

Nathan Rafferty, Utah Ski Association

Craig Gordon, Utah Avalanche Control

Bruce Trempez Utah Avalanche Control

April Jones, mother of a son who was killed by an avalanche

MOTION: Rep. Gowans moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:25 p.m. The motion passed unanimously with Rep. Barrus absent for the vote.

Rep. Ben Ferry, Co-Chairman

Sen. Dennis Stowell, Co-Chairman